

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were pending in the application. Claims 1-9, 11-15, and 18 were rejected. Claims 10, 16, 17, 19, and 20 were objected to. Claims 1-8 and 15 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the recited subject matter. Claims 9-11, 13, 14 and 16-20 are amended. Claims 21-27 are added. Claims 9-14 and 16-27 are now pending in the application. Claims 10, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are the independent claims. Reconsideration of the amended application is respectfully requested.

Initially, the undersigned thanks the Examiner for consenting to the informal interview on August 26, 2004 to discuss the abandonment and status of the present application.

The Examiner objected to the drawings because of a question mark pointing to one of the features of Fig. 1. A substitute drawing sheet is submitted herewith, in which the question mark has been removed. The objection to the drawing, therefore, should be withdrawn.

The Examiner rejected claims 13 and 20 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The Examiner noted numerous portions of claims 13 and 20 that require clarification. Claims 13 and 20 are amended to clarify the noted language. Specifically, claim 8 is amended to positively recite the first retainer, and claim 13 is amended for consistency. Claim 20 is amended to recite a series of studs, and to clarify that "said stud" refers to each stud in the series of studs. Corresponding changes are made to claims 15-19. All of these amendments were made for clarity only, and not to avoid prior art.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6, 8, and 9 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Goldsmith; claims 1-4 and 7-9 as being anticipated by Kostecky; claims 8, 9, and 14 as being anticipated by Satchell; claims 8, 11, and 12 as being anticipated by Miles; and claim 15 as being anticipated by Desy. The Examiner also rejected claim 5 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldsmith, in view of Smolik; and claim 18 as being unpatentable over Desy, in view of Brunemann.

The Examiner also objected to claims 10, 16, 17, 19, and 20 as depending from a rejected base claim, but acknowledged that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all the subject matter of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-7 are canceled without prejudice.

Independent claim 8 is also canceled without prejudice, and objected claim 10 is amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 8. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 10 is allowable. The objection to claim 10, therefore, should be withdrawn. Rejected claims 9, 11, and 14 are amended to depend from allowable claim 10; claims 12 and 13 depend from claim 11. It is therefore submitted that claims 9 and 11-14 are allowable as well. The rejection of claims 9 and 11-14, therefore, should be withdrawn.

Independent claim 15 is canceled without prejudice, and objected claim 16 is amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 15. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 16 is allowable. The objection to claim 16, therefore, should be withdrawn. New claims 21-24 are added, reciting the subject matter of claims 17-20, respectively. Claims 21 and 22 depend from allowable claim 16; claims

23 and 24 depend from claim 22. It is therefore submitted that claims 21-24 are allowable as well.

Independent claim 15 is canceled without prejudice, and objected claim 17 is amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 15. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 17 is allowable. The objection to claim 17, therefore, should be withdrawn. Rejected claim 18 is amended to depend from allowable claim 17. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 18 is allowable as well, and the rejection of claim 18 should be withdrawn. New claims 25 and 26 are added, reciting the subject matter of claims 19 and 20, respectively. Claims 25 and 26 depend from allowable claim 18. It is therefore submitted that claims 25 and 26 are allowable as well.

Independent claim 15 is canceled without prejudice, and objected claim 19 is amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 15 and of intervening claim 18. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 19 is allowable. The objection to claim 19, therefore, should be withdrawn. New claim 27 is added, reciting the subject matter of claim 20 and depending from allowable claim 19. It is therefore submitted that claim 27 is allowable as well.

Independent claim 15 is canceled without prejudice, and objected claim 20 is amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 15 and of intervening claim 18. It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 20 is allowable. The objection to claim 20, therefore, should be withdrawn.

In summary, objected claims 10, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are amended into independent form, rendering them allowable. Dependent claims 9, 11-14, and 18 are amended to

depend from these allowable claims, and corresponding claims are added as appropriate to capture all allowable dependencies.

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that all objections and rejections have been overcome. It is therefore requested that the Amendment be entered, the claims allowed, and the case passed to issue. If any outstanding issues remain, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to expedite allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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